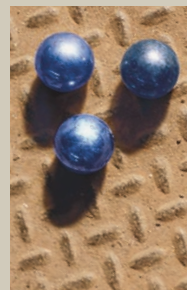


# SPOTLIGHT ON PATH PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS

**Program Focus:**

**PATH Working with Project Homeless Connect**



August 3rd, 2009



# PATH

Projects for Assistance in  
Transition from Homelessness

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## Disclaimer

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Available: <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov>

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov>

Contact: [path@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:path@samhsa.hhs.gov)

## WHAT IS PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT?

Imagine a place where, in a few hours, you could have a prescription filled, have your teeth cleaned, get a haircut, talk to a benefits counselor, and shop for a new jacket—all in one location where everyone was friendly and concerned about your well being. This is the idea behind Project Homeless Connect. Project Homeless Connect began in San Francisco in 2004 and is now implemented in over 130 cities across the United States. The year after it was first implemented, the Interagency Council to End Homelessness launched the National Project Homeless Connect Partnership. On one day in 2005, 26 cities served 8,800 individuals at Project Homeless Connect events around the country. During one week in 2006, 40 cities hosted Project Homeless Connect events and served nearly 22,000 individuals. Project Homeless Connect looks different

in every community, but the one thing that remains the same is the desire to deliver as many services as possible on one day, under one roof (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2007).

The partnership between PATH and Project Homeless Connect is a natural one. PATH workers have relationships with hard to reach consumers, as well as strong connections with other providers in their communities. Across the country, PATH providers participate in Project Homeless Connect events in a variety of ways. Some have set up booths, conducted outreach prior to and during the event, and provided services. Others have played a direct role in planning and organizing. In the following sections you will find examples of how different PATH programs participate in Project Homeless Connect and additional tips and resources.

# LOCAL PATH AND PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT PARTNERSHIPS

## Jefferson-Blout-St. Clair (JBS) Mental Health Authority, Alabama

After a ten-month planning process, Birmingham, Alabama held its first Project Homeless Connect in the spring of 2008. The event is overseen by Metropolitan Birmingham Area Shelter Providers, a membership organization of the continuum of homeless service providers. Different individuals and groups plan various aspects of the event. Service areas (health, mental health, housing, etc.) are organized by team captains, while a volunteer organization called Hands on Birmingham organizes and recruits volunteers.

The PATH team from JBS is also active in planning the event. On the day of the event, the PATH team provides mental health referrals, intakes, and assessments. In addition, the team acts as an on-site resource for other providers and participants who have a less comprehensive knowledge of the available services.

## Reliance House, Connecticut

Reliance House is embarking on its third year of participating in Project Homeless Connect. In southeastern Connecticut, the cities of Norwich and New London both host a Project Homeless Connect event. The planning is co-coordinated by a PATH worker and the mental health authority. The coordinators are supported by a committee of agencies in the geographical area that take responsibility for recruiting services. The event takes place in October, which is well timed for the administration of flu shots and applications for the winter overflow shelter.

Two PATH workers attend the event. They begin to enroll interested individuals into PATH and link them to other services at the event, such as mental health services, medical services, entitlement services, and housing. Within 48 hours after Project Homeless Connect, the PATH workers follow up with each of the individuals who became enrolled.



Project Homeless Connect is about getting consumers what they need right there—tooth extractions, haircuts, an appointment time to come for mental health intake, a driver's license or identification card...Project Homeless Connect is all about connecting them to the services that they needed to further their recovery and their transition out of homelessness.



— Lisa Turley Carey

Community Relations and Training Coordinator  
Jefferson-Blout-St. Clair Mental Health Authority  
Alabama

## Norfolk Community Services Board, Virginia

Several years ago, the director of Norfolk's Office to End Homelessness and the PATH Homeless Project outreach worker made a pilgrimage to the west coast to spend some time learning about San Francisco's Project Homeless Connect. Now, Norfolk hosts Project

Homeless Connect and is embarking on its 6<sup>th</sup> event. On the day of the event, teams of volunteer outreach workers go out on foot to invite people. The volunteers also have a phone number that they can call to ask a driver to pick up individuals. At the end of the event, guests are transported wherever they want to go. The vehicles and drivers come from the local programs and some are donated for the day by city departments. In addition to the use of outreach volunteers, one of the innovative services at the event is the provision of city ID cards.

Two outreach workers from the PATH program organize the outreach volunteers for the project, including an orientation on how to do outreach with people experiencing homelessness. This has proven to be a great opportunity for the volunteers and many come back to volunteer for outreach year after year. In addition to organizing the outreach volunteers, on the day of Project Homeless Connect, the PATH outreach workers continue their regular work with on-the-spot case management and assisting consumers in accessing services.

### **Orange Pearson Chatham Mental Health (OPC), North Carolina**

In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Project Homeless Connect was born out of state funding opportunities for Project Homeless Connect events. The town of Chapel Hill applied for the funding and assigned a town planner to help coordinate the event. The town planner proved to be invaluable in accessing the facility and setting up the logistics and IT support for the event. The local university has several departments that get involved, and the

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Our official role at Project Homeless Connect is to coordinate and train the outreach teams. There are some individuals who will not come into the event with a stranger, so we will go out specifically to find them and bring them into the event. During the course of the day, we also have a great opportunity to provide case management and help make service connections for individuals we are already serving in PATH and those we have just met during the event.

”

— **Pamela Davis**

PATH Homeless Project

Norfolk Community Services Board

Virginia

Catholic Student Center coordinates all of the food for the day. The North Carolina Registry of Motor Vehicles participates in the event by establishing a separate line specifically for individuals who were coming from the Project Homeless Connect event.

PATH helps to plan and provide outreach for the event. The PATH outreach worker and a team of police officers work together to identify areas of town where information about the event should be distributed. On the day of the event, the PATH worker does her usual outreach rounds and encourages people to come in for services.

## TIPS FROM PATH PROGRAMS FOR PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

### **Project Homeless Connect is a great opportunity to generate community awareness**

Project Homeless Connect is a great opportunity to create awareness, not only among the volunteers, but also for the community at large. Volunteers in Alabama reported that they had not realized how close each of us is to homelessness. Several communities have made YouTube™ videos to promote their Project Homeless Connect events, and many are covered by the local media. If your community is new to Project Homeless Connect, use publicity from other communities to generate interest and excitement. As you get started, create your own videos and scrapbooks of news clippings of your process and successes.

### **Get the city or county officials invested in the event**

In Chapel Hill, the city designated a town planner to organize the Project Homeless Connect event. This connection opened the doors to resources and staff time, information technology services on the day of the event, city volunteers, automobiles for transportation, and a location.

### **Organization and delegation are two keys for success**

While some Project Homeless Connect events are smaller in scale, many are huge events with dozens of services and hundreds of volunteers and attendees. Being the point person is a demanding task, and the designated individual needs to have time carved out to plan.





In addition to a point person, many communities utilize team captains. A team captain has knowledge of a specific service area, such as medical or housing, and he or she recruits and organizes volunteers and organizations for that specific service area. Frequent meetings are a great tool to organize people, generate excitement, and create awareness of possible conflicts — like avoiding scheduling the same day as a university home football game.

### **You don't need to reinvent the wheel**

Lots of communities are already doing Project Homeless Connect events. If possible, attend another community's event before planning your own. You could travel to San Francisco like the Norfolk PATH program did, or stay closer to home and visit one of your neighboring communities. Many communities are happy to share the experiences they have had with Project Homeless Connect. In addition, find out if there is a local Project Stand Down event. Project Stand Down is similar to Project Homeless Connect, but it focuses specifically on services for homeless veterans.

### **Think of creative ways to involve the community with in-kind donations and unique services**

At many Project Homeless Connect events, haircuts and massages rank with housing as the most popular services. Consider your connections and the different kinds of services you enjoy and see if you can get them involved. Also think about organizations or businesses



in your community that may be interested in participating. Local colleges and faith-based communities are often a great resource for volunteers and donations. The key to getting organizations involved is dedicating time to reach out to the community. At Reliance House, plans are underway to solicit donations of tents, sleeping bags, and other supplies from large department stores and local businesses. The more donations you acquire, the more funding you will have left over for clothing vouchers, bus tokens, and other resources. On the following page are some ideas to get you started.

## **Organizations/Services to contact:**

- Benefits Assistance;
- Bike Repair;
- Colleges/Universities;
- Dental Cleanings;
- Entertainment;
- Extractions;
- Faith Based Organizations;
- Haircuts;
- Housing Services;
- Identification Cards;
- Medical Services;
- Mental Health Services;
- Podiatry;
- Registry/Department of Motor Vehicles;
- Social Security;
- Social Services; and
- Veterans Affairs.

## **Donated goods to collect:**

- Backpacks;
- Blankets;
- Clothing;
- Food (for the event and to take away);
- Sleeping Bags;
- Socks;
- Toiletries; and
- Transportation Vouchers.

## **Have as many services as possible available at the event, and track meaningful outcomes**

Project Homeless Connect isn't about getting on a waitlist or getting an appointment three weeks from now. It's about walking away with something that you needed when you came in. Sometimes at Project Homeless Connect events, organizations will distribute information and make appointments but are unable to provide services on the site of the event. While this is an important first step, individuals who are experiencing homelessness often have difficulty following up with appointments. In an ideal world, individuals would be able to complete a full intake in a private screening area and meet their case manager while still at the Project Homeless Connect event. At many events some people are able to get housing or jobs by the end of the day. On the day of the event, try to have as many housing vouchers or beds available and employers who are ready to hire people as possible. Beyond the big services like housing and healthcare, ID cards can open up doors for individuals, whether you create a city ID card or provide vouchers for state ID cards.

## **Volunteers are crucial for Project Homeless Connect events**

Volunteers can be utilized at Project Homeless Connect events in many ways. Doctors may donate their time to conduct physicals, dentists may perform extractions, and cosmetologists may cut hair. Project Homeless Connect events also use volunteers as personal concierges or outreach workers. Volunteers who have personal experience with services and homelessness can be a great addition to your team.



Norfolk stresses the importance of an orientation for volunteers, especially if they will be doing outreach, to address safety issues and how to approach and interact with people. JBS Mental Health Authority used Hands On Birmingham to coordinate volunteers. Hands On Network is a national organization that recruits and organizes volunteers for different service activities and may be a resource for your community (<http://www.handsonnetwork.org>).

### **Try to find ways to keep lines short, or at least entertaining**

The biggest complaint from the volunteers at the Birmingham event was that they didn't like that guests had to stand in line for registration and some of the services. While it might not be possible to eliminate lines all together, possible solutions include using more volunteers, having a place for individuals to sit and eat and then take them in waves to the services so the crowds aren't as intense, or creating ID cards that can be scanned at future events so the intake process goes more quickly. In Chapel Hill, they went so far as to establish an express line at the Registry of Motor Vehicles for individuals who received vouchers to renew their licenses or get IDs. Another solution that could open opportunities for involving community groups in creative ways is to provide entertainment while individuals are waiting in line or a place to do artwork while waiting.

### **It doesn't stop with organizing services... you also need to get people to come!**

In the weeks leading up to the event, most communities spread the word by posting flyers in shelters, soup kitchens, and other locations where people who are experiencing homelessness may congregate. PATH can play a large role in this effort by talking to people about the event and passing out literature. On the day of the event, most Project Homeless Connect events have transportation available to and from the event, whether it is an outreach team with a van, designated bus pick up spots, an agreement with a cab company, or bus tickets. Transportation has proven to be crucial to get individuals to come in for services, especially in rural areas.



Project Homeless Connect has been a rallying point for our 10-Year Plan; it was our first big public event since we implemented the plan. I think it was great in terms of drawing publicity and awareness for the plan itself. If this many people can access services in one day by coordinating services imagine if we could have a center where this would always be happening.



— **Vanessa Neustrom**

Community Planner and Housing Coordinator  
Orange Pearson Chatham Mental Health  
North Carolina

## WHERE TO GO FROM HERE



For communities that do not have established Project Homeless Connect events, the first step is to strategize about how to begin the conversation. Often, Project Homeless Connect events fit in well with the goals of Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness, so contacting the individuals who are implementing and coordinating your state or community Ten Year Plan would be a good place to begin. Check out the National Alliance's Ten Year Plan website to see what is going on in your community (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/communityplans>).

The best resource for information on hosting a Project Homeless Connect is *Project Homeless Connect, A Step-By-Step Guide, 2007*, which was developed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). This guide includes the history of Project Homeless Connect and essential elements for a successful event.

There are also many useful articles and tools from USICH that can be helpful for organizing and implementing an event, whether or not it is your first event.

While the event is only one day, attending can change a person's life. Some who attend have lived on the street for years and they walk back out at the end of the day having received medical care, dental care, a warm meal, a city ID card, and the keys to their new home. It is a chance for a new start. In addition, Project Homeless Connect can also have a lasting effect on communities. It is a rare opportunity to bring together people from many diverse professions, from cosmetologists to doctors, from outreach workers to college students, and have them all using their individual skills to help others in their community. Project Homeless Connect reinforces the idea that a healthy society that takes care of its people is possible.

## REFERENCES

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2007). *Project homeless connect: A step-by-step guide*. Washington, DC: Author.

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We have had great support from local businesses and social services that want to help out. In Project Homeless Connect, the key to success is working together. It's not about those of us who are providing the services, it's about the individuals and families we are serving.

”

— **Erik Clevenger,**  
Director  
Reliance House,  
Connecticut

# RESOURCES

## Resources from PATH Providers

### Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness: Project Homeless Connect Toolkit

This toolkit was developed from Connecticut's experience with Project Homeless Connect. It provides sample thank you letters, forms, flyers, and other materials that may be useful in planning your event.

Direct Link: <http://www.cceh.org/toolkits.htm>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33100>

### Orange Pearson Chatham Mental Health (OPC) Area Program Flyer

This is the flyer that was used to advertise OPC's Project Homeless Connect event.

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33101>

### Norfolk, Virginia Project Homeless Connect Website

Norfolk's Project Homeless Connect website is a great example of a simple webpage with a lot of information. The website contains information on the event, contact information, and online volunteer registration. The site does change depending on the local events so at certain times in the year Project Homeless Connect information may not be available.

Direct Link: [www.norfolk.gov/homelessness/events.asp](http://www.norfolk.gov/homelessness/events.asp)

## Resources from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

### USICH Website

This website is your one-stop-shop for Project Homeless Connect. Several of the available resources are highlighted below.

Direct Link: [www.usich.gov/slocal/NationalProjectHomelessConnectPromo.html](http://www.usich.gov/slocal/NationalProjectHomelessConnectPromo.html)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33105>

### Project Homeless Connect, A Step-By-Step Guide, 2007

This document provides an overview of Project Homeless Connect, tips for holding events, and information about innovative ideas that are being implemented across the country.

Direct Link: [www.ich.gov/slocal/2007-10-01NPHCToolkit1.0.pdf](http://www.ich.gov/slocal/2007-10-01NPHCToolkit1.0.pdf)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33106>

## Sample Event Forms

This webpage contains links to many different forms that may be helpful templates for planning.

Direct Link: [www.ich.gov/slocal/eventforms.html](http://www.ich.gov/slocal/eventforms.html)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33107>

## Sample Service Guide and Map

Project Homeless Connect events have so many services available that they may be overwhelming. This sample document can help generate ideas for how you want to convey information about services that are available.

Direct Link: [www.ich.gov/slocal/PHC\\_SF.pdf](http://www.ich.gov/slocal/PHC_SF.pdf)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33108>

## Project Homeless Connect Press Kit and Sponsorship Packet

These webpages have materials available from The Interagency Council on Homelessness to be used to generate interest in and sponsorship for Project Homeless Connect.

Direct Link: [www.ich.gov/slocal/presskit.html](http://www.ich.gov/slocal/presskit.html)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33109>

Direct Link: [www.ich.gov/slocal/sponsorshippacket.html](http://www.ich.gov/slocal/sponsorshippacket.html)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33110>

## Securing an ID for Persons who are Homeless— A Project Connect Innovation from Norfolk and San Francisco

This document discusses strategies used to help individuals obtain identification cards at Project Homeless Connect events.

Direct Link: [www.usich.gov/innovations/20in20/innovation3.doc](http://www.usich.gov/innovations/20in20/innovation3.doc)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33111>



## Video Sharing and Social Networking “Show” Real Results in Ending Homelessness

The Interagency Council on Homelessness featured social networking to promote Project Homeless Connect as an innovative practice. At the end of this document are links to several examples of You Tube™ videos developed by some cities to promote their events.

Direct Link: [www.usich.gov/innovations/20in20/innovation16.doc](http://www.usich.gov/innovations/20in20/innovation16.doc)

Homelessness Resource Center Record:  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33112>

## Resources from Project Stand Down

### Project Stand Down Website

Project Stand Down is an event, similar to Project Homeless Connect, that aims to serve homeless veterans. It originated in San Diego, California in 1988 and The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans began to lead the movement in 2002.

Direct Link: [www.nchv.org/standdown.cfm](http://www.nchv.org/standdown.cfm)

### Project Stand Down Guide

This web-based guide contains more information about how to organize a Project Stand Down event and the resources that are available.

Direct Link: [www.nchv.org/page.cfm?id=122](http://www.nchv.org/page.cfm?id=122)

## Project Homeless Connect Websites

Several areas that host Project Homeless Connect events have created their own websites to help with coordinating and planning. These websites may be helpful to get ideas about how to organize an event in your community.

### Eugene, OR:

[www.homelessconnect.org](http://www.homelessconnect.org)

### Indianapolis, IN:

[www.indyhomelessconnect.com/home.htm](http://www.indyhomelessconnect.com/home.htm)

### Minneapolis, MN:

[www.homelessconnectminneapolis.org](http://www.homelessconnectminneapolis.org)

### Norfolk, VA:

[www.norfolk.gov/homelessness/events.asp](http://www.norfolk.gov/homelessness/events.asp)

### Omaha, NE:

<http://homelessconnectomaha.org>



**Orange County, NC:**

[www.co.orange.nc.us/housing/ProjectHomelessConnect.asp](http://www.co.orange.nc.us/housing/ProjectHomelessConnect.asp)

**San Francisco, CA:**

[www.sfconnect.org](http://www.sfconnect.org)

**Tacoma, WA:**

[www.pchomelessconnect.org](http://www.pchomelessconnect.org)

## **Project Homeless Connect Videos**

Social networking through the use of YouTube™ videos is a new approach that some Project Homeless Connect events are taking to advertise their events and raise awareness. Below are some examples:

**Eugene, OR:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FnmzdUyVuc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FnmzdUyVuc)

**Louisville, KY:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Arw7S9I9J54](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Arw7S9I9J54)

**Portland, OR:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2arrh\\_arl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2arrh_arl)

**San Francisco, CA:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2dgukxCW5o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2dgukxCW5o)

**San Francisco, CA:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Z9WwuZgQTY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Z9WwuZgQTY)

**Springfield, MA:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVvRTpC8r7A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVvRTpC8r7A)

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- Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Community Renewal Team (CRT), CT
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# WHAT IS PATH?

## Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

The PATH Program—or Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness—was authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990. PATH funds community-based outreach, mental health and substance abuse services, case management, and limited housing services for people experiencing serious mental illnesses—including those with co-occurring substance use disorders—who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

## PATH funds stimulate state & local contributions

PATH funds are worth more than their face value because they are matched with state and local resources. For every \$3 in federal funds, state or local agencies must put forward \$1 in cash or in-kind services. At a minimum, a \$52 million Federal allocation would result in a \$17 million match. In some states PATH funds and the state and local match are the only resources specifically for serving people experiencing homelessness and mental illnesses.



## PATH providers deliver innovative services

PATH providers work with service delivery systems and embrace practices that work. These include:

- Partnering with housing first and permanent supportive housing programs
- Providing flexible consumer-directed and recovery-oriented services to meet consumers where they are in their recovery
- Employing consumers or providing consumer-run programs
- Partnering with health care providers, including Health Care for the Homeless to integrate mental health and medical services
- Assertively improving access to employment
- Improving access to benefits, especially through SSI/SSDI Outreach, Advocacy, and Recovery (SOAR)
- Using technology such as PDAs, electronic records, and HMIS

## PATH providers are strong community partners

PATH providers and State Contacts are involved in local and regional planning efforts to end homelessness, including Continuum of Care, 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness, and other planning efforts. PATH providers and State Contacts work to ensure that services are coordinated and available to people experiencing homelessness.

For more information about PATH, please visit <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov>



# PATH

Projects for Assistance in  
Transition from Homelessness